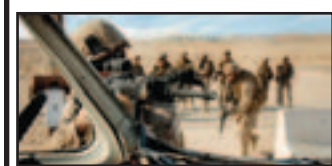


MHawaii MARINE

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THOMAS JEFFERSON AWARD WINNING METRO FORMAT NEWSPAPER

DECEMBER 7, 2007



Training
A-3



Dance
B-1



Sports
C-1



Corporal Levi Evenson, left, and Lance Cpl. Dan Plummer, machine gunners, Headquarters Company, 3rd Marine Regiment, unload a wooden pallet at the Base Landfill during Pride Day. Evenson and Plummer were cleaning behind Anderson Hall and found the pallets along with several old fire extinguishers.

Units make clean sweep during Base Pride Day

Story and Photos by
Christine Cabalo

Photojournalist

Service members and civilians wiped out trash around Kaneohe Bay as they cleaned during Pride Day Nov. 29.

Each command had a section of Mokapu Peninsula to clean litter and groom surrounding greenery. Civilian and active duty members worked together to cut down invasive plants around Nuupia Wildlife Management Reserve.

"The focus is getting a good general cleanliness," said Master Sgt. Joseph Taitingfong, deputy base inspector, Base Inspector's Office, MCBH. "We're taking away everything: any old broken furniture hiding in the bushes or abandoned car parts in parking lots."

New areas were added in the cleanup, said Petty Officer 1st Class Melissa Eilders,

aviation structural mechanic and Pride Day coordinator, Marine Aviation Logistic Squadron 24. Volunteers trimmed and collected litter around the Base Chapel and Post Office, said Eilders.

All collected biodegradable trash ended up in the Base Landfill. Corporals Levi Evenson and Dan Plummer, machine gunners, Headquarters Company, 3rd Marine Regiment, helped empty one of the last trash bundles into the landfill.

"We found a lot of wooden pallets behind the chow hall," Evenson said. "There were other things in the back, like glass and fire extinguishers. Those things we'll take to the Recycling Center for disposal."

The deputy base inspector said abandoned items are found continually, and regular mass cleanups help cut down what's leftover. Taitingfong said he's seen strange items left

behind during regular checks.

"Once by the gas station we found a dead octopus," he said. "It was strange to see on the road. Even now, no one knows how it got there."

In previous Pride Day events, volunteers have collected as much as 2,800 pounds of trash. This year's strategy for cleaning was to equally focus on all outdoor base areas to find abandoned items and loose trash, the deputy base inspector said.

"We've found things in ravines nobody would have known about if we didn't have Pride Day," he said. "I think the event is really a day for the units abroad to be observant and very meticulous about how the base looks."

The deputy base inspector said one of his concerns is ensuring loose trash is col-

See PRIDE, A-6

Tree ceremony kicks off '07 holiday season

Story and Photos by
Lance Cpl. Alesha R. Guard

Combat Correspondent

Marine Corps Base Hawaii's annual tree lighting ceremony kicked off the holiday season Sunday at Dewey Square here.

Children and adults alike gathered to help officially start the holidays aboard base, after quite a bit of preparation.

"There's a lot of work that goes into coordinating the night," said Master Sgt. James Whitley, this year's event coordinator and operations chief for G-3. "When you see the kids light up, it makes all the hard work worth it."

The U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific Band played Christmas music throughout the night as children ran, jumped and danced near the sparkling tree.

"The MFP band was phenomenal as always," Whitley said. "They did a wonderful job."

With Christmas carols ringing and artificial snow blowing in the Hawaiian air, some Marines were reminded of home.

"The band was really great," said Lance Cpl. Dustin Dickens, adjutant chief, Headquarters Battalion. "'You're a mean one Mr. Grinch' was my favorite song of the night. My grandmother, mom and I used to always watch the movie, and it reminded me of home."

See TREE, A-6



Colonel Mark A. Dungan, commanding officer, Marine Corps Base Hawaii, lights the Christmas tree at Dewey Square here Sunday.

Petraeus: violence down, fight not over

Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

BAGHDAD — Violence in Iraq has dropped significantly in recent months, but it's still too soon to declare the home stretch in U.S. operations here, the commander of Multi-National Force – Iraq said today.

Army Gen. David H. Petraeus cited significant security progress during a roundtable with reporters at the Camp Victory. Following the roundtable discussion, the general spent an hour with visiting Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates.

Weekly attacks in recent

weeks are roughly 60 percent of the levels they were in June, Petraeus said. High-profile attacks are down 60 percent from their high in March, and attacks overall have dropped during the last seven weeks to levels not seen here consistently since spring 2005.

As a result, fatalities are down, too. Civilian deaths have fallen dramatically to rates not seen since late 2005. And during a year Petraeus acknowledged has witnessed the most U.S. combat losses since operations first began in Iraq, the figure for November was its lowest in 20 months.

See FIGHT, A-6

Toy toting bikers come bearing gifts for tots

Cpl. R. Drew Hendricks

U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific

HONOLULU — "I can hear the rumble," said a bike enthusiast as more than two thousand bikers from around the islands and the world came thundering into Kapiolani Community College during the 33rd annual Street Bikers United Toy Run.

Even the pouring rain did not stop these riders from taking the four-mile ride through Waikiki to donate nearly 1,400 toys and cash for the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve's annual Toys for Tots drive.

The bike clubs come from all walks of life, riding all manner of motorcycles. Choppers, Harleys, fat boys, low riders and sport bikes of all shapes, colors and sizes were decorated in Christmas fashion as toys were loaded up. Some bikers, like Sonny Awai from the bike club Kahuna Ikaika O' Ke Aiwa



Chuck Little

Sonny Awai, of Kahuna Ikaika o ke Aiwa Motorcycle Club, Honolulu, leads a procession of more than 2,000 bikers in the 33rd annual Street Bikers United Toy Run through Waikiki Sunday. Awai's custom-made sleigh was laden with toys for the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve's 60th Anniversary Toys for Tots collection drive.

(which means "Teacher – Strongest of the Land" in Hawaiian), dressed up as Santa Claus and pulled wheeled sleighs packed with

toys for the tots.

"It's all from the heart," said Awai, who has been participating in the toy run for more than 10 years. "We

want to make the kids and the parents happy this and every year."

See BIKERS, A-6

— NEWS BRIEFS —

Chinese Garden Renovations

The Chinese Garden closes Dec. 19 to Jan. 30 for renovations. The Tennis Shop and Game Room will reopen Dec. 26.

For more information, call Normand Cote at 254-7639.

CI/HUMINT Specialists Needed

Marine Corps Counterintelligence/Human Intelligence is looking for intelligent, motivated, multi-talented and ambitious corporals and sergeants (lance corporals and staff sergeants on a case-by-case basis) for lateral move into the 0211 military occupational specialty.

For more information on prerequisites, training and operations ask your career retention specialist, or contact MCBH career retention specialist Gunner Sgt. Michael Peck, at 257-5143/5142.

Interested parties can also call the Marine Forces Pacific CI/HUMINT Branch at 477-8447. Or, visit <http://www.mfp.usmc.mil/CI%20FLYER-NEW.doc>.

MCCS Offices Moved

The Marine Corps Community Services Children, Youth & Teen Program, including the Family Child Care administration, has moved to Building 5082, the former location of the Marine Corps Family Team Building Office, which is now in Building 244.

For more information, contact CYTP at 257-7430 or MCFTB at 257-2087.

Control Your Pet or Lose Privileges

Base Order 5500.15B, Chapter 4, clearly states: "Persons walking dogs in public must have positive physical control of their dogs."

Housing handbooks clearly state: "If your pet is leashed outdoors, the leash must be less than 20 feet long, and the animal may not move outside your yard."

If you have questions about pet regulations, refer to the Family Housing handbook, or contact your area housing inspector.

Additionally, the Game Warden may be of further assistance and can be reached by calling 257-1821.

Hawaii Marine Accepts Letters

Hawaii Marine invites its readers to e-mail its editor at hmeditor@hawaiimarine.com with their comments and letters.

All submissions will be edited for clarity and length. Comments must be signed with a full name and a telephone number.

Hawaii Marine also accepts news briefs containing relevant information pertaining to Marine Corps Base Hawaii.

Important Phone Numbers:

On-Base Emergencies	911
Military Police	257-7114
Child Protective Service	832-5300
Fraud, Waste, Abuse & EEO	257-8852
Business Management Hotline	257-3188
Pothole & Streetlight Repair	257-2380
Base Information	449-7110
MCBH Duty Chaplain	257-7700
DEERS	257-2077

Hawaii MARINE

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Pfc. Achilles Tsantariotis

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FAX: 257-2511, PHONE: 257-8836**

It’s home: cherish it



Sgt. Macario P. Mora Jr.
Press Chief

The other night I was perched in front of my computer, eating a pint of Ben & Jerry’s and convincing myself tomorrow would be the start of my “new” diet, when a funny vision flashed before me on the monitor - President George W. Bush was congratulating former Vice President Al Gore and the other American Nobel Prize winners at a White House gathering. I chuckled, shoved a scoop of Half Baked in my mouth, and continued to bore my 105-pound wife about the merits of a proper diet and exercise routine. Then, inconveniently, “An Inconvenient Truth” and

a rotund Al Gore began to “flood” my planetary consciousness.

With a head full of environmental awareness and Green Peace exuding from my tree-hugging pores, I remembered a conversation I had with one of my naïve Devil Dogs a few weeks ago.

I was collecting cans and bottles (AKA laundry money) from the desks in my office when the Marine asked me if I was a bum or actually cared about recycling. Dumbfounded by his Neanderthal-like query, I jokingly told him, “I’m saving dolphins.”

“[Expletive] dolphins,” he said.

“I like tuna,” said somebody from the Peanut Gallery.

Again perplexed, I asked him, “Don’t you care about what the world will be like for your children and grandchildren?”

“That’s their problem,” he said.

Aware the conversation was pointless, I thought “if only I had more facts to shove in his arrogant face.” Now, I do.

Recycling:

- Each week, to produce the Sunday newspaper, a half million

- trees are cut down
- If Americans saved a tenth of their newspapers each year, we’d save 25 million trees
- Plastic in the ocean each year kills more than a million sea creatures
- Americans throw away more than 25 million plastic bottles an hour
- Glass bottles take 4,000 years to decompose; plastic lasts forever

Global Warming:

- The last two decades of the 20th century were the hottest in several millennia
- The Arctic could be completely ice free by 2040, greatly affecting Polar Bears and indigenous cultures
- The average temperature is up 1.4 degrees Fahrenheit since 1880
- Wild fires, heat waves, tropical storms and other weather phenomenon are attributed to climate change by some scientists

Rainforest:

- The rainforests once covered 14 percent of Earth’s land surface; it now covers six percent and could be gone in less than 40 years
- One and a half acres of rain-

- forest are lost every second
- It’s estimated we’re losing 137 plant, animal and insect species every single day due to deforestation, equating to 50,000 species annually
- Nearly 2,000 trees are cut down every minute
- Half of the worlds plant, animal and insect species live in the rainforest

Old habits die hard, but I hope pigs parading about in human guise can reverse their views about recycling, the environment and Earth. Society is so conscious of the material world; lets take a moment, and reflect before tossing that cigarette out the window, and understand the real cost before starting up that SUV. Know where that newspaper comes from and be aware of CO2 emissions in a bottle of Fiji water.

Environmental awareness is no longer the sole responsibility of a few dirty, barefooted, tie-dye San Franciscans chained to a half-dozen redwoods. The preservation of our planet falls on the shoulders of everyone.

(Sources: <http://www.rain-tree.com>; <http://www.nationalgeographic.com>; <http://www.recycling-revolution.com>)

Christmas tree safety tips

Steven Kalnasy
Base Safety Center

With Thanksgiving behind us, its time to focus on the Christmas holiday, and what better way to show your holiday spirit than by setting up your Christmas tree?

Before you take that leap, take a moment and ask yourself a couple questions. Will your tree be real, or will it come out of a box? What kind of lights and ornamentation will you use? To help you get started, here are a few safety tips to ensure your holiday is something you want to remember and not forget.

Christmas Trees

A real tree can add to the Christmas spirit by filling your home with beauty and pine scent.

But it also poses fire hazards. Each year, more than 400 residential fires involve Christmas trees and nearly 40 deaths and 100 injuries result from those fires.

Select a fresh, green tree.

Pine and spruce needles should bend and not break and should be hard to pull off branches.

On fir, needles from a fresh trees snap when bent, much like a fresh carrot. Also, look for a trunk sticky with sap.

Cut about two inches off the trunk and put the tree in a sturdy, water-holding stand.

Keep the stand filled with water so it doesn’t dry out quickly.

Stand your tree away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources. Make sure the tree does not block foot traffic or doorways.

If you use an artificial tree, choose one tested and labeled as fire resistant.

Artificial trees with built-in electrical systems should have the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label.



Tree lights/ornaments

Do

Only use indoor lights indoors, and outdoor lights only outdoors. Look for the UL label.

Check lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections.

Replace or repair any damaged light sets.

Turn off lights on trees and decorations when you go to bed or leave.

Use a proper step stool or ladder to reach high places.

Read labels before using materials from jars, cans and spray cans.

Avoid placing breakable tree ornaments or ones with small, detachable parts on lower branches where small children or pets can reach them.

Don’t

Never use more than three light sets on any one extension cord.

Extension cords should go against walls to avoid tripping hazards, but don’t run cords under rugs.

Don’t place lit candles on a tree or near flammable materials.

Don’t hang popcorn chains and candy canes on the tree when small children are present. They may think that other tree ornaments are also edible.

Weekend weather outlook

Today

Day — Showers likely and possibly a thunderstorm. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 78. Breezy, with a south wind around 23 mph.

Night — Showers likely. The rain could be heavy at times. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 73. Breezy, with a south wind around 20 mph.

High — 78

Low — 73

Saturday

Day — Showers likely. The rain could be heavy at times. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 80. South wind around 11 mph.

Night — Scattered showers. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 76. East wind around 13 mph. Chance of precipitation is 40 percent.

High — 80

Low — 76

Sunday

Day — Scattered showers. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 81. East wind around 16 mph. Chance of precipitation is 40 percent.

Night — Scattered showers. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 76. East wind around 16 mph. Chance of precipitation is 30 percent.

High — 81

Low — 76



Lance Cpl. Kevin Ayala, dismount, JUMP Platoon, H&S Co., 2/3, provides cover as Pfc. Daniel R. Gallardo, JUMP gunner, heads to Ayala's position to post on the other side of the vehicle during an Urban Assault Course lane training exercise Nov. 5 at Range 111.

JUMP leaps beyond Marine Corps respect

**Story and Photos by
Cpl. Mark Fayloga**

Combat Correspondent

MCAGCC TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. — When the staff sergeant speaks, his Marines listen.

This is the way it works in the Marine Corps. When a senior Marine is talking, junior Marines show proper respect and listen. But with the Marines of JUMP Platoon, a security detachment from Headquarters and Service Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, there's more to it.

As the Hemet, Calif., native passes word to his Devils at Camp Wilson here, a school circle forms around him. A portable DVD player previously blaring a movie is shut off and put away. A handheld videogame system, which just held one Marine captivated on reaching the next level, shares the fate of the DVD player. Even though the temperature is well below what the Hawaii-based Marines are use to, no one is rubbing their hands together or making any attempts to heat up. They simply stand and listen.

Just an icebox of a hooch with 15 sets of eyes and ears locked on the staff sergeant and his voice. They are really listening to him.

It isn't because he's a big guy, which he is. Weighing in at a muscular 215 pounds and just a few inches short of six feet tall, he's easily the most physically dominant Marine in the platoon.

As a newly pinned staff sergeant he's the highest-ranking enlisted member of

JUMP by two ranks. Still, that has little to do with the respect he commands. As he'll tell you himself, "rank only goes so far."

It's because above all things his Marines respect him as a person, as he does them.

"I was always raised, even before I came into the Marine Corps, that in order to get respect, you have to give respect," said Staff Sgt. Solomon Jennings IV, platoon sergeant, JUMP, H&S Co., 2/3. "I always keep in mind that these guys aren't only Marines, but they're men first. They're young men and if you treat them with respect you're going to get respect back. I treat every one of these guys with respect, just like I want to be treated. It was always my intent as a leader to have them respect me, Solomon Jennings IV first, and this rank is just secondary."

The philosophy of earning respect as opposed to demanding it has worked well for the 26-year-old. His superiors have taken notice, sighting the approach as a bit different, but successful.

"It's a fine example of small unit leadership," said 1st Lt. K.C. Trost, officer-in-charge, JUMP, H&S Company, 2/3. "He's been out of the fleet world for a while and he's developed a unique leadership style for these guys and it works well."

Trost sites the different approach to leadership as a result of Jennings' primary military occupational specialty as a career retention specialist.

"He's got more of a recruiter mentality, trying

to keep the Marines in and find the happy balance between what the Marine Corps needs and what the Marines want," said the Downingtown, Penn. native. "Things run efficiently. We have some really young [non-commissioned officers] but they get everything done. They know what needs to get done."

Jennings, along with over half of the Marines in JUMP, is new to the platoon, which has only been active for three months. They only come together to work during deployments.

According to Jennings, the idea behind JUMP is to give 2/3 a high-speed force available as a security detachment, but without taking too many experienced Marines from line companies. They "didn't want to take away from the combat power," he said. JUMP is an all-volunteer detachment, which Jennings believes helps the platoon.

"No matter what we have to go through together, these guys don't complain because they're the ones that volunteered to be here," Jennings said. "They actually want to be here. They didn't want to be in an office, they actually wanted to be out there leading a patrol, mounted behind an [M240G machine gun] or doing something of that nature, feeling like they're contributing something other than their administrative skills to this War On Terror."

Only a handful of JUMP Marines come from an infantry background, with the rest hailing from administration shops and

supply warehouses. When deployments roll around, similar to the way Clark Kent sheds his business suit to fight evil as Superman, the Marines of JUMP come together in the proverbial phone booth of training. The Lava Viper and Mojave Viper exercises serve as their opportunity to get up to speed on combat tactics and perhaps more importantly, build unit cohesion.

According to Cpl. Walter A. Marinero, a JUMP gunner, although they don't normally work together, many of them have been friends for a while. Only the four privates first class of JUMP are truly new to the platoon, and thanks to the time they've had to bond during training they are fitting into the family-like style of JUMP well.

"We're not a full platoon," said the Mesa, Ariz. native. "We're a little more than a squad and it makes it easy for us to get to

know each other even better. The new guys are learning it takes friendship, not just friendship but a true bond. They see that we're beyond Marine Corps respect and we'll give them respect and they'll give us the respect back."

It always comes back to respect for the JUMP Marines. The idea of giving respect for more than just rank, but for the person underneath the chevrons has worked well for JUMP and is a driving factor behind the closeness of its Teufelhunden. It's allowed Jennings to earn a high level of trust and admiration from his juniors in a short amount of time.

"Staff sergeant is new, but he is one of those staff noncommissioned officers that will get your back no matter what happens," Marinero said. "He's one of the leaders you want to work under."

The admiration goes

both ways as Jennings sights the accomplishments of JUMP directly to his Marines.

"There's only one of me," Jennings said. "There's only one platoon sergeant and there's so many more of them. I'm depending more on them than they are on me. So I always keep that in mind. I just treat them with respect the same way I would like to be treated and those guys reciprocate and do the exact same thing for me. They make my job very easy."

JUMP has navigated the two-way street of respect with the precision of a stunt driver and it shows in all they do.

Whether it's completing a training evolution here or something as common as passing word, the success of JUMP all boils down to one simple thing: when the Marines speak, the staff sergeant listens.



JUMP Marines gear up prior to heading out to complete lane training at Range 215 Nov. 21.



Private First Class Daniel R. Gallardo (left), gunner, and Cpl. Marcus W. Preudhomme, dismount team leader, both from JUMP Platoon, H&S Company, 2/3, assess targets downrange.



Respect runs deeper than chevrons in JUMP Platoon, Headquarters and Service Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment. The platoon, slightly larger than a squad, only comes together during deployments yet still manages to be successful in all tasks. It could be because, as 1st Lt. K.C. Trost, officer-in-charge, JUMP, H&S Company, 2/3, puts it, "We pull the best from each section of 2/3."



Charlie Miller, 3, picks out another design from a chart Monica Bradley, volunteer, shows her. Face painting was just one of the many activities Santa's Village volunteers ran for the young visitors.



Kailyn Hlavacek, 1, sits on Santa's lap at Santa's Village at the Child Development Center here Saturday.

CDC kicks off holiday season with Santa’s Village

**Story and Photos by
Lance Cpl. Regina A. Ruisi**

Combat Correspondent

Her little blue eyes lit up, and her tiny lips formed a two-toothed smile as her daddy held her and said, “You’re going to see Santa today, aren’t you?”

In daddy’s arms, one-year-old Kailyn Hlavacek waited in line, mom in tow, outside the Child Development Center here Saturday to get into Santa’s Village.

At 9 a.m., Santa’s helpers opened the front doors to the CDC, and Kailyn and other children made their way inside, greeted by the smiling faces of volunteers and the

glimmering of red, gold and green garland in the morning sun. Kailyn waited patiently in line to see the “Big Man” for the second time in her life. This time was bound to be different from her last run — in with St. Nick in New York City, when she was only three weeks old.

“I think it’s nice that the CDC is doing this for the kids on base,” said Amanda Hlavacek, Kailyn’s mother. “I’m taking her to do all the activities that she can do.”

Kailyn and her parents made their way to their first of many activities in Santa’s village after exchanging smiles with Santa and receiving a free picture.

In the first room, Kailyn

joined a table full of other children and played with red play-doh, using cookie cutters to create holiday shapes. After a little bit of snacking on the play-doh, Kailyn was whisked away to create a holiday goodie bag, complete with stickers and crayons for decorations.

The next room on the trip was holiday paper chains, where Kailyn attempted to eat tape while her parents helped her put together red and green strips of paper to create a short chain.

“That one’s going on the tree,” Amanda said in a cooing voice to her daughter, who returned the praise with a smile.

Kailyn’s goodie bag filled up with decorations she

helped her parents make, including pipe cleaner candy canes and paper gingerbread men. Kailyn seemed particularly fond of the red and green macaroni necklace she made for daddy. While in his arms, she continuously grabbed the noodles, her lips turning green and red from paint.

The Hlavacek’s weren’t the only family enjoying their visit to Santa’s village. Parents, children and volunteers alike enjoyed the chance to start the holiday season together.

“This is a great opportunity for kids and families to bond and start getting into the holiday spirit,” said Angela Freitag, Marine Corps Family Team Building, Marine Corps

Community Services. “The kids’ energy is awesome. It really catches you up in it. My whole family is here volunteering. This is something we can do as a family. My husband was in the military for 20 years and this is our way of giving back to military families.”

After a few hours of play, Kailyn left Santa’s Village with a bag of homemade decorations for their tree and pleasant memories her parents will remember fondly for years.

“I really liked the village,” Amanda said. “It was a lot more fun than I expected. The best part was Santa. It’s tradition, something we’ve been doing since we were kids. It’ll be nice to be able to send a

photo home to everyone who’s not here in Hawaii with us for the holidays.”

Kailyn’s dad, a Marine who returned from Iraq in October, was thankful for the chance to share this experience with his young daughter, as well as the opportunity to get away from work.

“It really takes you away from work,” said her father, field artillery cannon crewman, Battery C, 1st Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment. “You easily forget you’re on base. It was a lot of fun. You forget what it’s like to be a kid. It’s amazing how a couple pipe cleaners and a crayon can make them so happy and really bring back the memories of your childhood.”

Federal workers gain more access to medical benefits

**Story and Photo Illustration by
Christine Cabalo**

Photojournalist

Federal employees on the hunt for better medical plans now have more healthcare insurance options during the 2008 Federal Benefits Open Season.

Civilian workers have new annual access to two medical insurance plans: the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program and the Federal Flexible Spending Account Program. These programs can save money on dental work, eye exams and other healthcare costs.

“Generally we focused on just the federal healthcare program during previous open seasons,” said Kathy McGettigan, deputy associate director, Retirement and Insurance Service, Office of Personnel Management. “The direction we went in this year is to give out information about existing dental and vision programs, which could be helpful.”

Before the change, federal employ-

ees had infrequent openings to enroll or make changes in these medical plans. Unless workers meet specific criteria, Monday is the final day they’ll have access to the programs until next year.

OPM has online guides and tools people can use when deciding what coverage is best, said Ron Ostrich, program manager, Planning and Evaluation, OPM. The manager said there are tools that show specific costs for up to four insurance carriers so people can make their own comparisons. The tool also lists contact information for each participating company. McGettigan said the online informational guides help people understand who’s eligible for certain programs and what plans cover.

“We’re hoping to enable people to make informed choices about their healthcare with the guide,” she said. “It points out to people what they should consider in choosing coverage.”

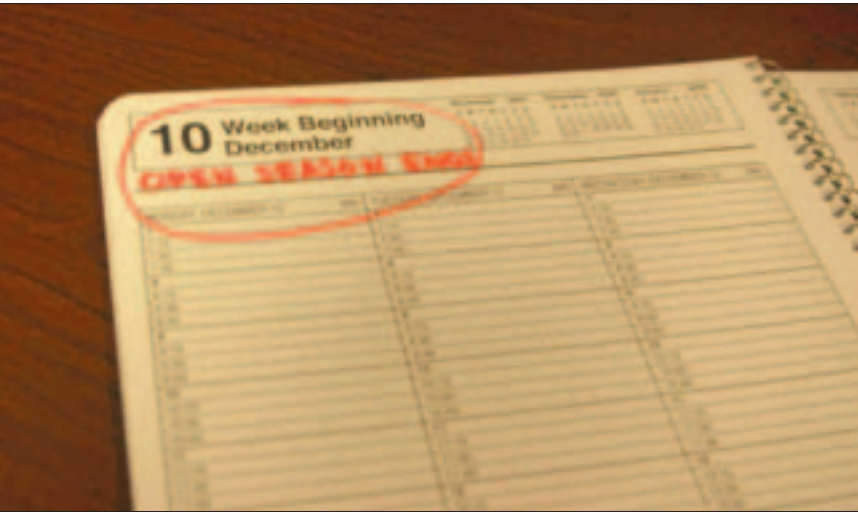
The deputy associate director said workers should consider what their

medical needs are and if they are completely happy with their current plans. OPM’s online guide is the same as the hard copy given to employees, and it provides a quick summary how to make changes.

“For most benefits programs you can enroll or make cover changes during ‘Qualifying Life Events’ or our annual open season,” Ostrich said. “Those events could be getting married, the birth of a child or a death in the family. Should you want to make changes when those events happen, you’ll have to do it at that moment.”

McGettigan said real savings are possible for federal employees with plans such as the Federal Flexible Spending Account Program. Tax-free funds are available in this program for current workers to use on prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, and doctor visits. Federal dental and vision plans offer supplemental help in paying for other medical costs uncovered by the general federal healthcare plan.

The deputy associate director said employees should also consider their



future healthcare costs, including what to do during retirement. McGettigan said OPM is continually working to provide new, effective ways of informing federal employees of available benefits.

“We want to make sure there’s a cost transparency so you can really see how much insurance carriers will cover,” she said. “If you want to add on your coverage with these plans, you should ask yourself: ‘Do you reg-

ularly use any specialists?’ or ‘What prescriptions do you use?’ After answering those questions, the guide can give people real savings and help them make good choices.”

For more information about the available programs or to use any of the insurance comparison tools, log on to <http://www.opm.gov/insure/>. To sign up for any of the medical programs, log on to <https://www.benefeds.com/>.



Classic Volkswagen Bugs rode as part of the 33rd annual Christmas Car Cruiser event, which supported the Toys for Tots drive Nov. 25.

Toys for Tots drive shows off classic cars

Story and Photos by
Pfc. Ethan Hoaldrige

U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific

HONOLULU — Instead of Santa’s sleigh and reindeer, a train of hotrods with roaring engines and polished chrome paraded through Waikiki, bearing Christmas gifts for unfortunate children, Nov. 25.

The 33rd annual Christmas Car Cruiser event displayed nearly 100 classic automo-

biles from throughout the island riding in support of the Marine Corps’ Toys for Tots drive. They drove from Magic Island to the Waikiki Shell parking lot.

Toys for Tots is celebrating its 60th anniversary as it collects toys for children before Christmas.

“All of us love classic cars, but we also love taking care of the children,” said Mike Russo, owner of a pristine 1966 Mustang. “The holidays are all about giv-

ing, and this is a fun way for us to do that.”

Marines from 4th Force Reconnaissance Company came to pick up the toys at the Waikiki Shell parking lot. They collected more than 200 toys.

“Its feels great to participate in the drive for the kids, because I grew up here in Waimanalo,” said Lance Cpl. Cole Edwards, diesel mechanic, 4th Force Recon. “Christmas is an important experi-

ence for kids, and we’re making it better.”

Thirty Marines from 4th Force Recon chip in their time and efforts to collect all of the toys at the different Toys for Tots events throughout the holidays.

Last year they collected more than 50,000 toys in Hawaii and hope to surpass that number this year.

“Hopefully the children won’t feel like Santa forgot about them this year; the Marines haven’t,” Edwards said.



Lance Cpl. Cole Edwards, diesel mechanic, 4th Force Recon Company, loads a military vehicle full of toys.

Marines inspect ‘Toys for Tots’ donations for recalls

Christine Cabalo
Photojournalist

Playing it safe, ‘Toys for Tots’ coordinators are on the look-out for hazardous toys.

Recent toy recalls for more than 80 children’s products are prompting Marines to be especially cautious when screening this year’s donations.

“Most donors have purchased their toys from larger chains,” said Staff Sgt. Jens Orsen, Toys for Tots coordinator, 4th Force Reconnaissance Company. “Those retailers have followed the recalls. We only take new toys, and none of the toys we’ve collected so far are on our watch list.”

Transporting toys from collection locations and special events, 4th Force Recon also oversees community volunteers who screen toys. Safe gifts are forwarded to the Salvation Army who will distribute the children’s toys.

“This Christmas, safety is a number one priority,” said Daniel De Castro, spokesperson, Salvation Army Hawaii. “We don’t want any toy to put a child at risk. Recently, lead content in the paint of toys manufactured in China has become a problem. We’re doing our best to keep those

toys away from children.”

Both the Salvation Army Hawaii employees and the Toys for Tots volunteers check donations using the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission’s list of dangerous toys. Workers have the commission’s photographic public reports of recalled toys, so spotting a hazard is simple.

“This year is different for us,” De Castro said. “The Marines certainly took the first course of action. They provide a list of toys recalled at their Toys for Tots Web site. They’re our first line of defense.”

Orsen said they check donations for dangerous parts when the items are suitable for various ages of boys and girls. Donors gave about 5,000 toys since Nov. 26, Orsen said. The goal is to collect 60,000 new toys for children this year, 20 percent more than 2006.

“We’re lucky to have the Salvation Army involved,” Orsen said. “I know in other communities the Marines not only have to collect the toys, they need to handle all of the work in distributing them.”

The Salvation Army Hawaii spokesman said it’s fundamental for donors to be aware of hazardous toys. De Castro said he hopes all retailers have

taken recalled products off their shelves, and Toys for Tots workers are very cautious when screening toys. No parent or family member has called his office to complain about receiving a dangerous toy.

“It’s unfortunate this is happening,” De Castro said. “It has a dampening effect on this holiday’s gift-giving. Toys a child wants may be on the recall list. We’re hoping for the best and doing whatever is in our power to ensure safety.”

Orsen said he hopes the combined efforts of Toys for Tots volunteers will still bring joy to children despite the mass toy recall. Celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, the Toys for Tots program began with the distribution of 5,000 toys to children in Los Angeles. In 2006, toy drives collected more than 5 million toys nationwide, according to the Toys for Tots annual report.

“It’s really important to remember this is a collaborative effort,” De Castro said. “Adults need to put more time in making sure they don’t buy anything hazardous. We would like to ask them to do a little research before they buy. There are lists from the commission of toys to avoid.”



No trouble for tots

Ensure child safety this Toys for Tots season by carefully screening your donation. Watch out for products recalled for choking dangers and high levels of lead paint.

The official Toys for Tots Web site has more information about hazardous toys:
<http://toysfortots.org/news/details.asp?ID=35>

Toy donors can contact the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission for alerts about suspicious toys. For a continually updated list of products log on to:
<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/category/toy.html>.





Children dance around the base Christmas tree's bright decorations at the tree lighting ceremony Sunday.

TREE, from A-1

Before the tree lighting, the chaplain gave a prayer, blessing the evening and all who have fallen, as well as those who are still fighting for our freedom. “The chaplain’s prayer was really nice,” Dickens said. “I think people appreciated the fact he respected everyone’s beliefs.” Colonel Mark A. Dungan, commanding officer, MCBH, spoke to everyone about the origin of Christmas lights. “It was really interesting to learn how Christmas tree lights came around and the first company to manufacture them,” Dickens said. “I never knew about the 40 foot Christmas tree at the White House, but now I want to go see it.” As the base commander lit the tree, a

soft “wow” was heard over the crowd, followed by children’s squeals of delight as they ran toward the lit elf house beneath the tree. “It was fun watching the little kids’ faces start to glow as the lights came on,” said Lance Cpl. Christopher Young, administration clerk, Headquarters Battalion. Gathered around the lights, the children laughed together, trying to catch the mysterious “snow” on their tongues as it blew from under the tree. Little did they know they soon would get a special visit from a certain jolly old fat man. Since it was a little warm for reindeer, Santa surprised the little ones on his warm-weather sleigh. “The best part of the night was when all the little kids bum rushed Santa as he

pulled up in the fire truck,” Dickens said. “They got so excited last year that we posted security next to the road for when he arrived tonight.” As Santa walked toward his big chair, he handed out hugs and candy to the children. Each danced in line, waiting with anticipation to tell Santa what they wanted for Christmas. “Some parents even brought presents to the ceremony so that Santa could give an early gift to their children,” Dickens said. Despite chilly weather with mild rain-drops, the children stuck it out for the special evening. “Except for the rain, it was a great event,” Whitley said. “The children seemed to have a great time and that’s who the night was for.”

FIGHT, from A-1

But Petraeus told reporters it’s far too early to talk about turning a corner or seeing light at the end of the tunnel. “Nobody in uniform is doing victory dances in the end zone,” he said. “There is much hard work still to be done and there are numerous difficulties, enemies and issues that still must be addressed.” The challenge, he said, is to continue bringing down violence and building Iraqi security forces to confront it themselves while promoting similar advances on other fronts. Petraeus credited the formula that’s brought about security progress: More coalition and Iraqi forces - conventional, special operations and counterterrorism - are in the fight. They’re infusing intelligence to target terrorists, and as they clear al Qaeda strongholds, they’re pursuing terrorists who flee to other areas. “As a result of our combined efforts, we have taken away a number of enemy sanctuaries, killed or captured numerous enemy leaders and rank-and-file members and disrupted enemy networks inside Iraq,” Petraeus said. Meanwhile, the Iraqi people who have tired of violence are becoming partners in the fight. Petraeus cited Sunni Arab’s widespread rejection of al-Qaeda and extremist ideologies. “As a result of this development, we have increasingly received important support and information from citizens in areas that used to be al-Qaeda sanctuaries and bases,” he said. Local citizens are committing personally to security in their areas, as well. They’re volunteering for the police, army or local citizens groups that are keeping once-violent neighborhood clear of al-Qaeda. They’re providing tips about terrorist activities and weapons. Petraeus credited their efforts for nearly doubling the number of weapons caches uncovered. “We believe the cumulative effect of these finds has gradually degraded our enemy’s ability to conduct attacks,” Petraeus said, emphasizing that the capability “certainly still remains.”

Petraeus also cited more aggressive action by Iraq’s neighbors, including Syria, to crack down on the flow of foreign fighters across their borders into Iraq. He expressed hope that Iran will live up to the promises its seniors leaders made to their Iraqi counterparts to stop training, funding, arming and directing groups that threaten Iraq’s security. Another promising development is radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr’s declared ceasefire this summer to rid his Mahdi Army militia of criminals and assassins. “We applaud al-Sadr’s action, even as all of us in Iraq, including those in his units, recognize that some elements connected with the militia continue to carry out criminal actions and thus must be dealt with by Iraqi and Coalition Forces,” Petraeus said. He said these recent positive trends and factors that have produced them “are changing the context in many parts of Iraq.” But the general conceded that the fight is far from over. “We have to be careful not to



Air Force Staff Sgt. D. Myles Cullen
General David Petraeus, commander, Multi-National Force - Iraq, and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Peter Pace survey sites as they fly to the Green Zone in Baghdad.

get feeling too successful,” he said, noting the need for “a continued amount of very tough work.” You “just keep your head down and keep moving,” he said, conceding that while officials push for more progress, there will be “setbacks along the way.” “Success in Iraq is not akin to flipping on a light switch,”

he said. “It emerges slowly and fitfully with reverses as well as advances.” As troops “soldier through” those successes and strive to build on the momentum, Petraeus expressed hope that Iraqi leaders “will take advantage of the security gains that have been purchased through the sacrifice of Iraqi and Coalition Forces.”



Corporal George Underhill, CH-53 helicopter airframe mechanic, Marine Heavy Squadron 362, combs through Fort Hase Beach Nov. 29 looking for loose trash. Pride Day workers found wooden pallets, old steel and litter during the annual base-wide cleanup.

PRIDE, from A-1

lected. He said he’s noticed litter and bulky items continually accumulate at areas like the base’s beaches because of the wind or the sea pushing trash around. Eilders said she’s noticed a lot of improvement in areas once trash gets collected. “I think the better you feel about where you work – the more pride you take in your work,” Eilders said. “Taking responsibility for the base I think makes everyone feel good.” The semi-annual cleanup is a cooperative project between the Base Inspector’s Office and the Environmental Compliance and Protection Department. Base volunteers have collected abandoned items and weeded out invasive mangrove roots for more than five years. Taitingfong said Pride Day isn’t just for base employees to volunteer to clean up. He said would love to see more civilian residents participate. “I’m hoping people get inspired to have a sense of residency,” Taitingfong said. “Sometimes when I inspect homes, I see people just let things pile up because they’ll be leaving later on. Residents and workers can take pride in the base with a little effort. Having a place you can be proud of starts from the inside.”

BIKERS, from A-1

The riders started the run at Magic Island in Waikiki and rode the four miles to KCC. The procession was led by the Marines of 4th Force Reconnaissance Company who brought a 7-ton-truck, a hummer and a van, which were all packed to the brim before the day was finished. “You have to take care of the kids,” said Lance Cpl. Hillard Meeks, a San Jose, Calif. native. “I think it’s beautiful to see all these people here to help. A lot of people have a misconception about bikers, but after seeing this maybe they will think twice before judging them.” Bikers who come to participate in the toy run say that while it’s all for the kids, they can’t help but get enjoyment out of it as well. “It feels good to help out,” said Bill Mechan, who made the run for the first time this year. “Seeing so many bikes out here all for one cause real-

ly shows the very best of the biker community – our camaraderie.” Aiwa and Mechan both said they will “absolutely” be back for next year’s run. The Marines of 4th Force Recon will of course be back next year, and this time with bigger trucks. “It’s amazing that all these people get together and come out to give toys to kids who wouldn’t have any otherwise,” said Lance Cpl. Scott Argue, a member of 4th Force Recon. “It’s good to go.” This year marks the 60th anniversary for the Toys for Tots program. Since 1947, Toys for Tots has collected more than 370 million toys and distributed them to more than 173 million children nationwide. Last year, Hawaii’s Toys for Tots drive collected more than 50,000 toys. This year’s goal is 60,000. Every toy and every dollar collected to purchase toys here in Hawaii goes to a needy Hawaii child.

AROUND THE CORPS

Fallujah imams, city leadership re-open Andaloos cemeteries

Public Affairs Office
Regimental Combat Team 6

FALLUJAH, Iraq — Fallujah residents reclaimed another portion of their lives here Saturday with songs and solemn respects to honor the dead in two cemeteries long off limits due to insurgent violence.

A months-long cemetery rehabilitation project, dubbed “The Love and Peace Project” by local imams, sought to clear all traces of terrorist activity from the burial grounds in Fallujah’s Andaloos district. Insurgents frequently stored weapons caches in the culturally sensitive area to avoid detection.

City leadership, imams and Coalition Forces members worked for months to prepare the cemetery. They all attended the elaborate ceremony to witness the final fruits of their labor.

“Fallujah is a city of love and a city of mosques. The city is now a city of peace,” said Sheik Najam, the eldest Islamic scholar in Fallujah. “Today, these honorable people bring back the honor to Andaloos and the city of Fallujah by establishing a safe place to pay respect to their families of the past.”

The project was entirely Iraqi-driven, from idea to execution. Marines with 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 6, did not become involved until the battalion’s chaplain, Navy Lt. Aaron Robertson, talked with imams to see if he could help. From these conversations, the battalion pitched in where they could, Robertson said.

“I am honored to have had the opportunity to work with the imams in this project,” said the Oceanside, Calif., native. “It is my hope that Fallujah will continue to grow and continue to come back to life. Every day we see the city taking steps forward.

These cemeteries honor those who have died and the improvements are ... beautiful.”

Unlike the United States where cemeteries are often isolated from populated areas, Fallujah’s burial sites are integrated into the heart of the city. Schools, mosques and police stations are within a stone’s throw of the grave markers.

The two cemeteries are 200 feet apart, separated only by a road running north to south. On the west side of the road is the cemetery for common deaths. On the east side is the much smaller martyrs’ graveyard, for victims of terrorist violence.

“After my first prayer of the day, I give praise to the dead. I can now give that praise within these new walls of the cemetery,” said Sheik Ahmed, an imam. “The improvements will now allow the people of Fallujah to safely visit this place and give respect to their family members who have been killed or have died.”

The ceremony is the most recent sign of a reinvigorated Fallujah. The city has changed its image from a terrorist enclave to a symbol of hope for Anbar province and Iraq.

“Fallujah is different than it was in 2003. The area is secure, the people are out shopping, and it appears like a normal life has been restored all around the city,” said Staff Sgt. Matthew Pogue, 36, platoon sergeant with Company K, 3rd Bn., 5th Marines. “It’s great to see the citizens taking pride in their city. If this were the city in which I resided, I would do the same. If there is anything that I can do to help them return to normalcy, I will give it my full effort.”

After the reopening, Maj. Gen. John R. Allen, deputy commander, Multi-National



1st Lt. Barry L. Edwards

Sheik Najam, the eldest Islamic scholar in Fallujah, cuts the ribbon for the re-opening of the Farooq Cemetery Saturday.

Force — West, and Col. Richard L. Simcock II, commanding officer, RCT-6, and other Coalition leaders went with the imams to pay their respects to the dead interred in the cemetery.

“This moment is something that deserves celebration, Simcock said. This is

evidence of what we can accomplish by working together for the betterment of Fallujah.

It wasn’t that long ago that we could not be standing here, doing what we are doing today. That speaks volumes about what can actually be accomplished.”

Allen echoed Simcock’s sentiments.

“Everyone in this martyr cemetery paid a price at the hands of the enemy, which makes this a very special place for the people of Fallujah,” he said. “The events here have been displayed for everyone to see the human cost of this war

and the war that was waged upon these innocent people who gave their last full measure [of] dedication in trying to liberate this city from al-Qaeda.”

The Iraqis said they plan on carrying this rehabilitation effort to other cemeteries in the city.